

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
ICA-11 IO-13 ACDA-12 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /110 W  
-----031155 191232Z /50

R 181537Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BONN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1182  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA  
USMISSION USNATO  
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 15076

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR, MT, LY, GW  
SUBJECT: MALTA'S LIBYAN OPTION

REFS: A) STATE 204506; B) VALLETTA 2585

1. THE GERMANS ENTERTAIN SERIOUS DOUBTS THAT MINTOFF  
WILL EXERCISE THE LIBYAN OPTION. WE BELIEVE THEY WOULD  
BE HESITANT TO INTENSIFY OR FORMALIZE DISCUSSION OF THE  
MATTER. WE SUGGEST INSTEAD THAT THE EMBASSY CONTINUE TO  
MONITOR THE MALTESE/LIBYAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIP AS A  
PART OF ITS REGULAR EXCHANGES WITH THE FOREIGN OFFICE.

2. THE FOREIGN OFFICE SHARES EMBASSY VALLETTA'S  
ASSESSMENT (REF B) THAT THE MALTESE WANT A BALANCED  
NEUTRALITY CONCEPT. THEY BELIEVE, MOREOVER, THAT  
MINTOFF'S THREATS TO PICK UP THE LIBYAN OPTION ARE A  
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TACTICAL GAMBIT DESIGNED TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE  
EUROPEANS FOR BUDGETARY ASSISTANCE. THE GERMANS SEE  
A NUMBER OF FACTORS WHICH MITIGATE AGAINST THE  
POSSIBILITY THAT MINTOFF WOULD INTENSIFY HIS RELATION-  
SHIP WITH TRIPOLI: MALTA IS A WESTERN-ORIENTED SOCIETY  
WHOSE ELECTORATE AND STRONG POLITICAL OPPOSITION WOULD  
REACT ADVERSELY TO INCREASING DEPENDENCE ON LIBYA.

MOREOVER, QUADHAFI IS, IN THE GERMAN VIEW, DISTRUSTED AND REGARDED AS DANGEROUS BY MANY MALTESE WHO WOULD HESITATE TO BE EMBRACED BY THE LIBYAN LEADER.

3. WHILE FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER CAME AWAY FROM THEIR NOVEMBER 1977 MEETING CONCERNED THAT MINTOFF MEANT BUSINESS, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT IN RECENT MONTHS HE HAS COME TO SHARE THE WORKING-LEVEL VIEW THAT MINTOFF IS ENGAGING IN BLACKMAIL AND IS NOT SERIOUS ABOUT THE LIBYAN OPTION. INDICATIVE OF FRG THINKING IS THE ALMOST NONCHALANT HANDLING OF MINTOFF'S REQUEST FOR BUDGETARY ASSISTANCE AND THE GERMAN REACTION TO HIS JULY 31 DEADLINE.

4. OUR RECENT DISCUSSIONS IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE INDICATE THAT THE GERMANS WILL NOT MEET MINTOFF'S REQUEST (MADE DURING GENSCHER'S NOVEMBER 1977 VISIT) FOR HELICOPTERS AND PATROL BOATS. AT BEST THEY ARE PREPARED TO PROVIDE VERY LIMITED, SMALL SCALE DEFENSIVE EQUIPMENT, POSSIBLY VEHICLES WORTH ABOUT DM 1 MILLION. NONE OF OUR RECENT DISCUSSIONS HAVE REVEALED ANY CONCERN ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF AN EXPANDING MALTESE/LIBYAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THE GERMANS WILL NOT BE PREPARED TO DO MORE IN THE MILITARY FIELD IN THE ABSENCE OF A CLEARLY INCREASING MILITARY TIE BETWEEN VALLETTA AND TRIPOLI. EVEN THEN, THEY ARE LIKELY  
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TO ARGUE THAT THE FRENCH AND ITALIANS SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD.

5. WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY VALLETTA'S VIEW THAT THE US SHOULD CLOSELY MONITOR THE MALTESE/LIBYAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. IN LIGHT OF THE VERY RELAXED GERMAN POSITION ON THIS SCORE, HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THEY PRESENTLY SEE A NEED FOR A SHARPER FOCUS ON THE QUESTION. WE RECOMMEND THAT, IN THE ABSENCE OF A CLEAR ACCELERATION IN THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP, WE CONTINUE TO KEEP THE GERMANS APPRAISED OF THE SITUATION DURING OUR PERIODIC EXCHANGES WITH THE FOREIGN OFFICE.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** FOREIGN RELATIONS, MILITARY ASSISTANCE, NATIONAL SECURITY  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 18 aug 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978BONN15076  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780340-0167  
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**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 78 STATE 204506, 78 VALLETTA 2585  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 19 may 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** MALTA'S LIBYAN OPTION  
**TAGS:** PEPR, MT, LY, GE  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014